



News Release

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Contact:
Jana Kettering, PIO
Utah Department of Health
801-538-6339

Utah Public Health Continues to Watch for West Nile Virus Activity

(Salt Lake City, UT) - There is no doubt that West Nile virus (WNV) will arrive in Utah, the big question is "when will it arrive?" No one knows for sure, but the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has tracking, monitoring and testing systems in place to detect the virus in Utah.

As of July 16, 2003, 32 states have confirmed the presence of WNV, compared with only 20 states at this time last year. This year, the virus has been detected as far west as Wyoming and Colorado, but has not yet been found in Utah, Idaho, or Nevada.

The UDOH is coordinating WNV detection with many state agencies, including the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food and the Utah Department of Wildlife Resources as well as local public health agencies and mosquito abatement districts. Utah agencies are using many methods to watch for the entry of the virus. Mosquitoes are being trapped and dead birds (hawks, eagles, jays, crows, ravens, owls, and magpies) and sentinel chicken populations are being tested. In addition, veterinarians have been educated on WNV symptoms in horses and physicians are testing patients who have compatible symptoms.

To date, the UDOH has conducted the following number of tests to test for the presence of West Nile virus. All test have all been negative.

- 10 humans
- 8 horses
- 583 batches of mosquitoes
- 1680 samples from sentinel chickens
- 86 dead birds

West Nile virus can cause a flu-like illness, but can also cause severe illness and possibly death. Individuals over the age of 50 are at greatest risk of serious illness and death. Contact your health care provider if you have a high fever, severe headache and stiff neck.

As Utahns celebrate Pioneer Day at many outdoor activities and recreate at lakes, pools and golf courses, it is important to remember to Fight the Bite to reduce the risk of WNV. To protect yourself:

- Protect between dusk and dawn (that's when mosquitoes are most active!)
- Use repellent containing DEET (30-35% concentration for adults; 10% for ages 2-12)

-MORE -

Page 2 of 2 - Utah Public Health Continues to Watch for West Nile Virus Activity

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors
- Remove standing water from around your home
- Repair screens around the house, use mosquito netting or screened tents when sleeping outdoors
- Contact your local health department if you notice a freshly-dead bird (hawks, eagles, jays, crows, ravens, owls, and magpies only)

Homeowners who want to know more about how to eliminate breeding grounds for mosquitoes can find a helpful fact sheet at

http://health.utah.gov/wnv/Mosq_Home_flyer.pdf

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